

HISTORY OF A TURTLE

(The following article appeared in the *Clipper* in 1951.)

Remember that box turtle we mentioned, marked "M.L.S. 1911?" The M.L.S. stands for Minerva L. Sherman of Depot St., aunt of Paul and Levi Cushing, who remembers marking turtles during her early years in Duxbury and Kingston.

"In 1911 my husband and I moved to a house on Main St. in Kingston Center," She says. "It was then a wooded section, and I remember finding a box turtle in my backyard at the time and marking it with my initials." Assuming this turtle didn't keep backtracking too much, it took it 40 years to get from Kingston to Island Creek. To think some of the subscribers are kicking

because the *Clipper* arrives only a month or 2 late!

Mrs. Edwin Sherman, who lived in Kingston after her marriage in 1894, remembers the sleigh races past the Wright estate in the 1880s. Her father was a mason who lived on Winter St., Duxbury, and here she grew up.

The box turtle, which was on display at Snug Harbor Motors until Mike Butler released it on the Golf Course, was 8 inches long.

Another Mystery

Dr. Alice Bigelow of Powder Point sheds light on this turtle: "The *Clipper* of July 19 refers to a turtle marked "M.L.S. 1911," picked up by a worker at Snug Harbor Motors. I turned at once to my own list of such encounters and found a detailed account of a box turtle which I had met in the deep woods off Birch St., bearing the same initials, and had brought home for description and record. This was in 1932.

"My notes record not only 'M.L.S.' but also 'P.W.W.', and a faint ancient record on the rear of the lower shell, containing '1877.' I have 2 photographs of his hawklike head, taken by my neighbor Marian Huckins. He was dropped in a patch of woods on Powder Point.

"After studying my notes, I went to the garage to examine the stranger, but found that he had been turned loose on the golf course."

Tortoise Shell Carving Debunked

Writing on ice is just as satisfactory as carving your initials on a live tortoise shell.

Dr. Loyce Holmes Miller, zoology professor on the University of California campus here, takes with a grain of salt those tales of tortoises that have survived for a century or so as evidenced by such initials and dates carved on their shells.

Miller has been observing desert tortoises for years and has found that such carvings within a year because of the regeneration characteristics of the reptile. It simply grows a new house.

MONSTER ON BEACH

(The following article appeared in the *Clipper* in 1955.)

The big turtle that washed onto Duxbury Beach during a recent storm, has impressed viewers in different ways. After hearing a report that "the monster" was 6 feet long, our statistical editor, approaching from the leeward, estimated a more conservative 5 feet, without taking the trouble to apply a yard stick, since you never could tell when the wind

might shift. And now comes a report from a wild life editor:

A 9-foot turtle, estimated by those who have seen it, to weigh some 900 pounds, was deposited lifeless on the sands of Duxbury Gurnet by pounding seas of an easterly storm 3 weeks ago. Water and weather-ravaged, the carcass of the huge traveler of the Atlantic's gulf stream, was found by Charles Brownell of Brockton, while he was traveling in his jeep along the Gurnet's surfline to his summer cottage at Saquish.

The length of the big brute, as Charlie termed it, was arrived at through enough heel-and-toe paceoffs in his size 10 1/2 boots, from its head to end of its flippers, to add up to 9 feet. He thought he would like to take its top shell and went to work with an axe he carried in the jeep. But it proved too tough a job. Curious as to what might have caused its demise, as it is said they live to be a century old, he pried open its beak-like jaws and peeked down its throat.

Saw something whitish caught well down its throat. So he cut off its head (which he now has) and with the whitish object still in place. It is a small "skull-like" head. Somewhat resembling that of an ape. The guess is, that whatever it might be, the turtle had swallowed it and choked, being unable to neither fully swallow nor disgorge it. Winds and ocean current finally brought it to its last resting place.